

First Tracks Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY360266
Inspection date	22 May 2008
Inspector	Susan Marriott
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Registered person	Cognita Limited
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Tracks Nursery was registered in 2007. Provision for pre-school children operates from a dedicated nursery unit at Akeley Wood Junior School while care for school age children is provided in the main school building. A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery for full day care at any one time and a maximum of 40 children under eight years may use the after school facility. The nursery is open 08.00 to 18.00 for 47 weeks a year for children from 18 months to under five years and after school care is available from 15.15 until 18.00 term-time only for pupils aged three to eight years. Children aged over eight may also attend. Pre-school children have access to a designated play area while older children use the school's outdoor play areas.

There are currently 17 children aged from 18 months to three years on roll. An additional 33 children under five years are accommodated in the nursery class and the reception class in the main school. Of the total 50 children, 41 children receive funding for early education. There are 52 children on the out of school register. Children come from the wider Milton Keynes area, Buckingham and the surrounding villages. The setting currently supports a number of children

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs six staff in the nursery and reception unit, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. An additional three staff work in the out of school provision. The setting receives support from the advisory services of the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow effective health and hygiene policies and procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in a properly clean state. Tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray and the toilets are kept clean and hygienic. Children receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency because most staff hold current and suitable first aid qualifications and the first aid box is accessible and suitably stocked. Staff conscientiously record all accidents and include the relevant details to protect children's welfare. Children learn about germs and healthy living. For example, children spontaneously announce that they must wash their hands to get rid of the germs. Children are able to rest in a cosy book corner, and sleep according to their needs on individual mattresses covered with their own individualised bedding and favourite toy or comforter. Sleeping children are kept safe because they are appropriately monitored by staff.

All the children enjoy daily indoor and outdoor activities which enables them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through a generally appropriate level of challenge. Children get outside in the fresh air on most days and relish their time outdoors. Plans show that the younger children use the school 'trim trail' on a regular basis and enjoy walks to the duck pond and other areas of the extensive school grounds. However, staff and management have not yet explored further ways of utilising the outdoors as a challenging resource to support children's learning and physical development. An adequate range of outdoor play equipment provides opportunities for children to climb and balance. Children use the fixed activity frames, bikes, tricycles, rockers and cars. Young children enjoy digging in the soil and practise their large arm movements by chalking on the wall mounted chalk boards.

Children benefit from healthy packed snacks provided by parents and healthy meals and snacks supplied by the school kitchens. Children do not become thirsty during the day because they can access their readily identifiable drinking bottle or cup at any time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed and well-cared for in a very pleasant, generally safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment. The staff make some use of the rural school environment, ensuring children get out in the fresh air every afternoon to participate in physical play and exploration and investigative activities. The staff have put up posters and pictures to make the rooms attractive for children and there are bright displays of children's work which significantly enhance the environment and involve parents and visitors in the type of activities which are organised for the children. For example, each child took some heart-shaped papers home with them and parents noted an act of kindness on each paper. These 'hearts' were read out in group

time and attached to the 'Heart of Kindness' displayed on the wall. Resources are clearly labelled and staff work hard to ensure that children can access resources in the playroom easily and independently.

Children are kept safe in the nursery unit because the doors are secured by magnetic locking systems to prevent unauthorised entry by adults and unobserved exit by children. Staff are vigilant in the nursery and reception classrooms and during the after school club. Children's safe arrival and departure is generally well monitored and children are very well supervised at all times. However, there are some instances when the hours of attendance of children are not recorded in the after school provision. Staff record fire evacuation procedures and carry out drills with suitable frequency to ensure the safety of the children. Staff monitor visitors to the setting by asking them to sign the visitor record. Relevant risk assessments are completed on a daily basis and indoor and outdoor areas are thoroughly checked before use. However, children's safety in the nursery unit is potentially compromised by the accessibility of hazardous plants. For example, the garden wall is covered in ivy and a yew hedge forms part of the boundary. Nettles grow at the base of the hedge. Furthermore, two unprotected metal supports for the outside area canopy present a potential danger to playing children. Children learn to keep themselves safe in the setting because staff give good explanations as to why, for example, it is not a good idea to run in the classroom.

Children's welfare is properly safeguarded because they are protected by vigilant and caring, informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Most staff have received suitable training in this field and relevant and current reference information is readily accessible.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children of all ages are very happy to be left by their parents or carers, thoroughly enjoy their time at this nursery and have lots of fun. They enjoy their play and learning because staff are confident, enthusiastic and skilled in their childcare practice. Children settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff, who encourage and build children's vocabulary through constant praise and recognition as they support play. Staff provide a broad range of worthwhile activities, both indoor and outdoor, which engage children throughout the nursery in the learning process. Children actively participate in the purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the busy atmosphere. Children have clear routines to their sessions and follow set procedures for certain activities which help them feel secure. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children.

Children make excellent progress in the development of their basic language skills because of the positive and consistent interaction of staff in conversations and play. Staff sit on the floor at the children's level to read a story or to sing familiar songs, enthusiastically encouraging the youngest children to actively participate in all that is going on. Photographs show the under threes at play, involved in an extensive range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and overall learning. Young children become confident to make choices, decisions, explore and investigate. They relate well to each other, to adults and to visitors to the setting because they feel secure and stimulated.

Staff confidently implement the 'Birth to three matters' guidance and actively use this framework as the basis for their planning and assessment for children under three years old. Plans set out the intentions for the first three days of the week and are then subject to evaluation and review.

Plans for the last two days of the week reflect staff assessment of children's needs and interests as identified from their observations which are clearly linked to the ages and stages of development of young children. Parents are asked to complete an 'All about me' sheet, which seeks insightful information enabling appropriate care to be given. Information gained from observation forms the basis of competent baseline assessment. This information provides staff with a clear starting point upon which meaningful planning for future learning can be based. Consequently, children make smooth and happy transitions from the First Tracks Nursery to the Nursery Class for three and four-year-olds within the main school.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children actively participate and become totally engrossed in an extensive range of stimulating activities which absorb their interest and present high levels of challenge to progress their learning. The staff demonstrate an exceptionally competent knowledge of the Foundation Stage and deliver a superb and varied programme of play-based activities which provide a clear balance across all six areas of learning. An excellent balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Highly innovative teaching, rigorous assessment systems and well planned and executed activities ensure children make rapid progress through the stepping stones, given their age, ability and starting points.

A flexible approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult and child-led learning allows children to learn at their own pace. Planning is highly effective because the staff have ownership of their system. A topic planner outlines what they want children to learn and how children will be enabled to learn. It sets out criteria for determining how staff will know who has learnt what and identifies what learning needs to take place next. Staff are keenly aware of how individual children learn and skilfully adapt activities to build on children's interests and spontaneous events. Staff take every opportunity to affirm children's achievements, consolidate existing knowledge and then lead children onto the next stage. They consistently deliver a diverse range of inspirational practical age-appropriate activities. This motivates children's interest and desire to learn. Children's work is valued by staff for the learning process and is not governed by the end product. Meticulous attention is paid to record keeping, reviewing and developing practice to meet the learning needs of all children. Observations are noted daily through the session and transferred into children's 'Learning Journey' folder. All observations are dated and noted against the stepping stones under the six areas of learning, with many being illustrated by photographic evidence. Children's progress is tracked through the stepping stones and staff can easily see what needs to be planned to progress learning.

Children enjoy good, trusting relationships with staff who get down to their level and engage in meaningful questioning, conversation and discussion which develops learning through purposeful play. Excellent support is given to the development of children's personal, social and emotional skills. Children learn to be independent in their self-care because staff take the time and trouble to show children how to do things for themselves. For example, when getting dressed to go into the garden, staff show children how to lay their coats on a chair and sit down before putting their arms down the sleeves and standing up. Children begin to develop a sense of social responsibility as they are encouraged to place waste paper into the recycling bins. Snack time is superbly managed and a highly effective learning time for children, promoting literacy, numeracy, social skills and independence. Children have snack together as a social event and clearly know the routine. They recognise their name card at their place and demonstrate an outstanding level of independence as they pour their own drinks, and share the fruit between them.

Outstanding teaching supports the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Staff speak knowledgeably and confidently about their teaching methods. A phonics scheme provides continuity of teaching across the Foundation Stage and children learn to link sounds and letters in a cohesive manner. Many children are able to build words and read simple books. They learn to trace and write familiar words and text has an important place in the environment. Plans and observations show that children learn about numbers, use mathematical language and solve simple problems through practical and meaningful everyday experiences.

Children are highly inquisitive about the world around them. Children comment upon and ask questions about the natural world as they examine living things to find out more about them. Displays show that children learn about recycling and the life cycle of the frog. Photographs and planning indicate that children undertake a vast range of diverse activities to learn about other cultures and festivals. Children develop their large and small muscles, using tools with increasing skill, and move freely and with confidence. They experiment with different ways of moving, using imagination and concentration. They have a good awareness of how their bodies work and healthy eating. Children use a range of malleable materials and effect change to the materials using a range of tools and equipment. Children explore colour, shape and texture using a wide range of media. They show good imagination when moving to music, and have a strong appreciation of songs and rhyme. Children engage in role play based on their own first hand experience, using materials imaginatively and engaging one another within their play. They select resources independently and initiate activities in a creative manner. They are able to express and communicate their ideas to staff and one another.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed and included in all activities. Children with English as an additional language are supported well and encouraged to use facial expression and physical gestures to indicate their wishes as they learn to make their needs known. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of others through simple planned activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. Children participate in art and craft activities connected with celebrations.

Children who have varying needs receive excellent support. Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any special requirements or information are discussed and consistent communication and information exchange takes place. Children's learning difficulties and/or disabilities are recognised and met sensitively. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision.

Staff provide excellent role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Children are well behaved in response to the consistent expectations of caring staff and any adverse behaviour is corrected using positive language. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff work really hard to develop a positive partnership with parents to support children's progress in learning. Extensive information is available for parents on a daily basis, because the hallway and notice board is used extremely well to display a wealth of information. The prospectus includes a summary of the six areas of learning. Staff try to encourage a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision

and are well supported by staff during the settling-in process through induction sessions. Staff encourage parents to share information about their children and they are able to see their child's records and regularly contribute to them if they wish. When working well, this arrangement of two-way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. This underpins their progress in the school and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The setting displays an appropriate complaints procedure and has a suitable system for recording any complaints in accordance with legislation. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is outstanding.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care and welfare is significantly enhanced by very good organisation. All required documentation is in place and readily accessible, and well-thought-out procedures ensure the efficient and safe management of the nursery and school. However, registration systems for the out of school provision do not always record the actual times of attendance of some children and this potentially compromises their safety in an emergency. The operational plan and comprehensive policies and procedures are appropriately linked to the National Standards and underpin good quality practice. The loyal and hard-working staff team are well qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare. They demonstrate a genuine commitment to on-going training to continually update their skills, knowledge and ability to meet the children's needs effectively. Staff follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide consistent and effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes highly positive outcomes for children.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The staff team are sufficiently supported by the head teacher who oversees all aspects of the management of the school. She is able to assess strengths and weaknesses generally well but has not yet sufficiently addressed the quality of outdoor play for the youngest children in the school. The head teacher continuously works with the school management team towards ensuring that all children receive the highest quality of education and this is supported through consistent review and monitoring of their practice, through regular supervision meetings, personal development training plans and appraisals. This motivates staff and contributes to the dynamic ethos of the whole team. The staff all work together to ensure that teaching methods take full account of the children's individual needs and the diverse ways in which children learn. They give up much of their own time to attend update courses and training to support their own professional development. This ensures that staff are able to deliver a highly successful early education programme for all children. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that children can play safely outside protected from hazards and that hazardous outdoor plants are made inaccessible to the children
- ensure that the out of school club register records the actual hours of children's attendance.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- explore ways of maximising the use of challenging outdoor play as a resource to support children's physical development and learning.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk